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## Some in House Look to Roll Back Bush Plans

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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WASHINGTON (AP) -- Some conservative Republicans in the House want to roll back much of the new Medicare drug benefit and the "No Child Left Behind" education law that President Bush made domestic hallmarks of his first term, a GOP lawmaker said Wednesday.

While praising Bush's leadership on fighting terrorism and passing tax cuts, Rep. Mike Pence of Indiana said it was important for Republicans to reassert conservative values that led them to control of Congress.

"The fate of the Republican majority ... will be largely determined by whether or not we rediscover those principles of limited government that more than anything else propelled us to majority status," said Pence, chairman of the Republican Study Committee, a group of more than 100 conservative House members.

Pence told National Press Club members at a breakfast briefing that his stated goal of undoing certain accomplishments of the first Bush term "makes me the skunk at the garden party."

He described several conservative goals for this term of Congress:

- Change the prescription drug benefit passed recently by Congress from a "one-size-fits-all entitlement" to a benefit for those who need federal help to buy prescription drugs.

- "Reverse the expanding federal role in primary and secondary education, which conservatives believe is a state and local function."

- Begin to steer back to the goal of a balanced budget.

- Restore the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech by pursuing changes in new campaign finance laws.

Pence said he was not speaking for all House conservatives but that many of them had similar concerns.

Republicans gain better results with legislation when they "start from the right and move to the middle," Pence said. That tactic was not followed in the case of the education measure requiring tougher standards for public school students, he said.

"I have no problem with Washington, D.C., finding ways to get resources to the schools, but not red tape, not mandates -- not turning Washington, D.C., into a national school board," he said.

The House conservatives may run into resistance from their GOP leaders.

Asked about Pence's aims, John Feehery, a spokesman for House Speaker Dennis Hastert, said of the Medicare drug benefit, ``Given a chance to work, it will save money in the long run. But he wants to take a look at entitlements -- make them more efficient."

Feehery said Hastert ``supported the president's education bill. He understands schools are controlled locally, but people want improved schools."

Pence said he is not questioning Bush's conservative credentials.

``I think the president is a conservative in his heart," Pence said, adding that he was ``cautiously optimistic" that will show up more often in Bush's policies.

``There was an awful lot of latitude given to this president in the wake of the tragic events of Sept. 11," Pence said, noting the difficulties of starting up the Department of Homeland Security, fighting the war on terror and conducting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. But Pence said it's critical for conservatives to reclaim their principles or ``risk electoral disaster."

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